

Martha Elizabeth Smith

Martha Elizabeth Smith was the daughter of Jesse L. Smith and Martha Pippin. She was born December 5, 1874 in Beaver Dam Township, Pitt County, NC, died September 5, 1943, in Farmville, NC. She married Arch J. Flanagan (Sr.) on June 8, 1898. She and Arch (Jay) had 2 sons.

Known as Lizzie, she grew up in the Beaver Dam/Bell Arthur community on a tobacco farm. After marriage, she lived with her family in Pitt County, NC near the Greene County line in the township of Farmville. She was a hardy, hard working woman, as most wives had to be in those days. She was adept at the type of housekeeping chores necessary at the time. Lizzie was ambidextrous and sewed, crocheted, etc. beautifully, with both hands. It was impossible to tell which hand she had made the stitches with. She was a good cook and could help with farm chores too. She is reported to have cooked breakfast (chicken, with gravy and biscuits) on one occasion and picked a large amount of cotton (near a bale) the same day. When her sons were old enough, she taught school at Lang's Crossroads in a two-teacher school. Eventually, the family moved to Farmville, about 3 miles away, into a house on West Church and Fields Street. The move was made in 1914 primarily for better schooling but probably social activities also. Lizzie had roomers and boarders. One of the roomers and boarders was a future daughter in law, Gayle Cheek.

During her early years she went with her father, Jesse Smith, to Oxford, NC where they spent some time learning to grow, cure and grade tobacco. Jesse was a pioneer in growing tobacco in their home locality. Lizzie was able to instruct the farm help in how to grade it for sale.

Lizzie's husband, Cousin Jay, died in 1923 and she and her son Arch managed the farm joined later by her other son, Curtis. Lizzie had a sister who married her husband's brother, John H. Flanagan and a brother, Ivy Smith who married her husband's sister, Nancy Penelope Flanagan. Her home was not far through the countryside from the home of the Archibald H. Flanagans and surely there was a lot of visiting back and forth. So many people in both families called her husband "Cousin Jay", that it was claimed she did too. Part of her husband's farm was on the Old Plank Road and her sister Bathsheba and John Flanagan lived on an adjacent farm on the same road. An interesting fact is that she was the 17th child of Jesse Smith who was married three times. She had 20 brothers and sisters. Her daughter in law, Gayle Cheek was also the 17th child and had 20 brothers and sisters.

Lizzie's passions were her family, her church and a duty to community members. She was active in the Farmville Christian Church. She tended along with her husband to be a bit stern in dealings with their children and grandchildren but not unkindly. A part of that was her school teacher background and the fact that her husband was some 36 years old when their first son was born. She had a special name given her by one of her grandsons,